presents

THE

BENSONHURST
NEIGHBORHOOD TOUR

October 12-13, 2019
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
If you live in an older home and have windows that are painted shut, broken, or in disrepair, there is an alternative to replacement that preserves the original beauty of your home and restores windows to their former glory. We offer full wood window restoration as well as maintenance and repair services.

Check out our restored window in the main floor bathroom at the Davis-Bradley House!
TOUR RULES & GUIDELINES

· Admission is by ticket only, no exceptions.
· All children must have a ticket, no strollers are allowed in any of the tour sites.
· Parking is only allowed at the Registration Site, a shuttle will be provided or you may walk or bicycle.
· Be aware that all of the tour sites are not ADA accessible. Needs of those with mobility impairments will be accommodated within the physical limits of the homes and the availability of tour volunteers to provide assistance.
· Respect the owner’s property. If a door is shut, do not open it. If a drawer is closed, do not open it.
· No smoking, eating, or drinking in any of the properties.
· No photography, unless approved by the homeowner. Signs will be posted.
· No pets.
· Only use restrooms in specified locations. Restrooms for patrons are available at the Registration Site and Home Site # 6.
· Booties are required to be worn in all the tour locations and will be given to you at the Registration Site. Carry your booties from site to site and put on at each location. Do not leave the site with your booties on.

Disclaimer

In consideration of the permission granted the tour participant to enter the home and premises on the tour, the tour participant hereby agrees to enter the tour homes and premises at his or her own risk and hereby releases the respective property owner and Restoration Exchange Omaha from any and all claims or causes of action due to injury to person or property that may arise during the tour.
# 2019 Bensonhurst Neighborhood Tour

## Home Tour Sites

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## Registration Site

- **St. James Orphanage**
  - 3300 N 60th Street

## Amenities

- Restrooms Available
- Designated Parking Area
- Bus Stop
- Bus Route

## Points of Interest

- **Creighton Home**
  - 2916 N 58th Street
- **Carlson Home**
  - 3302 N 58th Street
BENSONHURST NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

John H. Creighton was the original owner of the land that is now known as Bensonhurst. His farm covered several thousand acres. Contrary to some reporting however, he was not the developer of the Bensonhurst lots. He sold the land for $1,896 to William Young Brown in September 1856. The property changed hands through the years, eventually being purchased and platted by Edwin Lacey in 1892 as Lacey’s Addition. After Lacey’s passing, the executor of the estate sold the land to Imogen A. Benson in 1904. She and her husband Erastus A. Benson secured a $5,000 mortgage at 7.5% interest in July 1904. Erastus incorporated the Elsinore Place Company the following month with partners John B. and F.W. Carmichael. The Elsinore Place Company replatted the land in 1905 creating Bensonhurst, an addition to the Village of Benson.

Mr. Benson, interested in creating a uniformed suburban environment for his subdivision on North 58th Street, created restrictive covenants that required only residential construction with a minimum setback to the street of 30 feet for all the homes. He also required that each home cost no less than $2,500 to ensure quality construction. One of the most interesting covenants was a restriction on bartering or selling “malt or spirituous liquors” on the premise.

Almost immediately construction began on the lots as the Elsinore Place Company sold them to local builders and eager homeowners. Charles D. Creighton was among the first to build in the subdivision on three lots on the west side (2916 N 58th Street). The lots were marketed as attractive to buyers for their proximity to the trolley line, for having large lots measuring 63 feet by 226 feet long (very deep by normal standards), for a paved with permanent walks on both sides and for the huge stone columns marking the entrance. Two of these columns are still visible on the southern end of the block.

Two other early notable homes are 3108 and 3112, known as the twin houses. These homes were built by Harvey J. Grove, who, according to a 1945 *Omaha World-Herald* article, built over 2000 homes in the area during his career. Harvey and his wife Amanda "Mandy" Bellis Grove, lived in 3108, while Mandy’s younger sister Anna and her husband Nels Colson, a carpenter, lived in 3112. Both families were living in their homes according to the 1910 census. In 1959, the 58th Street News Girls
Erastus Benson interviewed Ted Grove, Harvey’s son and business partner, and Ted said “In the undeveloped land surrounding the two homes, were laid out a tennis court, golf links, and baseball diamonds by the young people of the neighborhood, and our cow pastured there.”

Originally, 58th Street was known as Imogen Avenue, however when Benson was annexed into the City of Omaha in 1917 it was converted to its current designation. The annexation of Benson was one of many forcible annexations that occurred between 1915 and 1917 in Omaha. Many of the 5,000 residents at the time were not in agreement with the annexation plan, including Mayor Ed Sorenson. Despite the fears by residents that Benson would be neglected out at the western extents of Omaha, the suburb thrived following annexation. The business district on Maple Street continued to grow and new tracts of land were platted and built upon. Many of the homes in Bensonhurst were constructed following the annexation.

The homes of Bensonhurst have all retained excellent integrity, most having been lovingly restored by owners over the years. This exceptionally long tree-lined street, with beautiful homes on deep lots, today looks much like Mr. Benson envisioned it would back in 1905 when he platted this subdivision, thanks to the concerted efforts of neighborhood residents that love where they live.
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Inc., formerly the St. James Orphanage, is a sprawling complex of buildings located near 60th Street (originally named Orphanage Avenue), and Bedford, just north of Benson’s main street.

The Sisters of Mercy started the orphanage in 1870 by 24th and St. Mary’s Avenue, and moved to the current 60th and Bedford site in 1890. The original campus building was constructed in 1902, and was directly located on Orphanage Avenue close to the street.

When Erastus Benson founded and laid out Benson, he donated 10 acres to the Sisters of Mercy for the orphanage. When the directors of the orphanage requested that a water main be laid out from Mayne Street (present-day Maple) north to the orphanage, Benson went before the city council with a proposal to run the line from Military Avenue and McKinley (present-day Wirt) to the orphanage. Since this would take the line through some land that he wished to develop, he offered to pay the assessment for all property involved.

The institution was the first home established in Nebraska for dependent, neglected, or orphaned children. In 1900, there were 87 children and 16 staff
members on site, compared to the village of Benson, which had 407 inhabitants. In 1893, the Archdiocese of Omaha assumed all obligations and became fully responsible for funding the orphanage, though the Sisters of Mercy remained as the operating staff. The original policy of St. James was to accept any child from Nebraska or a neighboring state. As more facilities became available in the area, the admission requirements were limited to Catholic children from birth to 12 years old, who were residents of the 23 counties comprising the Archdiocese of Omaha.

A nursery building was completed in 1927 on the south end of the campus, and is still standing today. Speaking at the dedication of the 1927 building, Bishop Beckman stated, “It is so edifying and encouraging to see so many gathered here for the dedication of this orphanage. I was eager to have Omaha people and those from the surrounding country gathered here today to see for themselves the working out of charity, as evidenced here.”

In 1927, 57 years after Sister Mary Gabriel received the first children (triplets) at St. James, she was present at the dedication of the new nursery building. Speaking of the old building, Sister Mary stated, “There were no conveniences, no bath, no lights, and no city water. And what conveniences they have now. This new building, really I can’t get over it.” At the time of the nursery dedication, nearly 13,000 children had passed through the orphanage.

Originally, St. James placed children in foster care or adoptive homes, but eventually this work was taken over by the Catholic Board of Child Welfare, and then by Catholic Charities. After World War II, a greater proportion of the children who were cared for needed special attention for educational or emotional concerns. The orphanage was open for 100 years, and was phased out in 1970. A daycare program at the campus operated for nearly 10 years afterward.

The historic buildings that currently make up the St. James complex include the main campus buildings - St. Mary’s Hall, Nazareth Hall. They were designed in 1931 by prolific local architect, Jacob Nachtigall, who designed dozens of Catholic churches and buildings in Omaha and across Nebraska. Arguably Nachtigall’s most famous work is Immaculate Conception Church at 24th and Bancroft Streets. Nachtigall also designed the nursery building.

*Laying the Cornerstone at St. Joseph Orphanage September 1931*
A. Teen Challenge of the Midlands (Creighton Home)  
2916 North 58th Street  
This three-story house was built around 1905 for Charles Creighton. He was the son of John D. Creighton, and the nephew of John and Edward Creighton, who helped found Creighton University. Charles operated the Creighton Garage and his hobby was breeding trotting horses. Charles fathered two children, Edward and Ellen. The house features a side-gabled roof and front-facing shed dormers. Despite the fact there have been some changes and alterations over the years, the Creighton House retains historic integrity. The entry is the portion of the house with the most historic value. Be sure to notice the front porch with interpretive Doric columns and a denticulated doorway with pilasters which were inspired by classical architecture. Elaborate sidelights flank either side of the front door. Large bracketed eaves grace the front of the house.

B. Kessler Home (Carlson Home) - 3302 North 58th Street  
This beautiful home was one of the earliest homes in the Bensonhurst subdivision and was hand-constructed by Carl Carlson, born in the United States to Swedish immigrant parents. In 1911 Carl L. Carlson, 31, married Mabel Meleen, 25, both of Omaha. They lived in Florence the first year of their marriage before moving into their new home in late 1912. Carl and Mabel had four children. Carl worked at First National Bank for 13 years and was an employee of the government revenue department for six years afterward. The red brick home is a classic American Foursquare design. Its notable architectural features include a hipped roof with dormers, overhanging eves, a large front porch and two prominent bay windows.
OUR EXPERIENCE AND YOUR EXPERIENCE MAKE FOR GREAT PRESERVATION PROJECTS
Elsinore Place and Company sold lot 41 to William and Elizabeth Burgess in June 1905 for $650. The Burgess sold it five years later for $1,100 to Joseph and Mary Peska, making a smart 70% profit. Joseph and Mary quickly sold it to Agnes and Alois Ujcik just three months later for the same price of $1,100. Agnes held the property for seven years and then sold to R.C. Person for $2,000 for an 81% profit. Finally, R.C. Person transferred ownership to Dr. Byron W. Hall and his wife Julia for $1,850 in September 1919.

This curious little home, just under 800 square feet, is quite the puzzler. It’s low-pitched pyramidal roof with widely overhung boxed eaves, and stone horizontal placement, are typical features of a Prairie style home, popular in the early 20th century. The petite size is enough to distinguish it from other homes on the street, but its spectacular red stone really makes it stand out.

In May 1923, Dr. B.W. Hall pulled a permit for a “Cobble Stone Garage for $3,500”. Despite the permit, there is no evidence the current structure was ever a garage. An interview with a previous homeowner, revealed that Dr. Hall collected cobblestone from streets in Benson that were being changed to pavement back in the early 1920s. He had a large pile in the back of the lot. His intention was to build a larger home like the others on the street, but first, had this little one built.
so he and his wife had somewhere to live while the larger home was constructed. The Roaring 20s rolled into the Depression and the larger home was never built.

Dr. Byron W. Hall was a Benson physician with deep ties to the community. His father, C. H. Hall, was president of Farmers & Merchants Bank of Benson, and his brother, Dr. C.C. Hall was the Omaha city veterinarian. Byron and his wife Julia lived in the home for many years, except for a short time in the late 1930s when Dr. Hall was a physician with the Civilian Conservation Corps in Weeping Water. The Halls rented their home to Harold and Helen Stroebel until 1940 when they returned home.

Unfortunately, in 1953, the Halls were murdered in their home by Nick Johnson, a Navy veteran suffering from mental health issues. He randomly choose their house and on Feb. 3, 1953 he shot the Halls and stole their car. The house was put up for auction and purchased by neighbors Harry and Ruth Knudsen of 2910 North 58th. The Knudsens never lived in the home; but leased to many tenants.

IMPROVEMENTS

The current owner, Liz Schwartz, did extensive research to find a home that was just right for her. She liked the exterior, but was really drawn in once she saw the interior. She loves the character with the built-in closets and china cabinet that include original hardware, the claw foot tub, the big park-like front yard, and of course, the unique stone. Her father loved it, too, and urged her to buy the house. Liz replaced the fascia board on the outside; her dad built stairs for the garage as well as insulated and drywalled its second floor, and added an attic; the stonework was repointed, and she is currently restoring the interior trim. Liz loves this home and this community and is an ardent champion of both.
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featured in the
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HISTORY

Sophia Thetro bought this lot for $700 in 1905 from Elsinore Place Company. After her death in 1915, the property was sold back to Grant Benson of Elsinore Place Company. In August 1916, Alice Duffy purchased the lot and the home was completed by 1917. According to the first Omaha City Directory that includes Benson in 1918, Alice Duffy resided at the home.

The home is very similar to 2927 North 58th. It is a Prairie Box, or American Foursquare, which is identified by its simple rectangular plan, low pitched hipped roof, and symmetrical façade with widely overhung boxed eaves. The full width, single story front porch with square supports compliments the two-story structure. The Prairie Box style originated in Chicago; and was very popular in early 20th century suburbs.

Ms. Duffy passed away unexpectedly in Los Angeles. Her son Ted, his wife, Agnes, and their daughter, stayed in the home for a few years before selling it to Eva and Gorton Roth in May 1921. Over the next several years, the home changed hands five times. During two of those years, Bert and Mae Ranz lived in the home. Apparently, the Ranzes loved the neighborhood. Bert Ranz was president of Farmers & Merchants Bank; and he and Mae previously lived at 2915 North 58th Street.
Carleton and Eva Mae Crisman purchased the house in May 1927. Carleton was an accounting clerk for Union Pacific Railroad. He and Eva Mae raised two daughters in the home, Helen and Clara. All the ladies were musically talented, especially Eva Mae who was a highly sought soloist. She performed at various Benson churches and lodges for both funerals and celebrations. The Crismans sold the property to Carl and John Nell Hoefs, who lived there only a few years before Carl’s job with the Atomic Energy Commission moved them to New Mexico.

From 1954 to 1956, E. E. Gilmore Jr., his wife Shirley, and children Ricky and Julie lived in the home. E. E. Gilmore Jr. was president of the very successful Gilmore Construction Company. His father, E.E. Gilmore Sr., was also prominent in developing Omaha and was once president of the Omaha Builder’s Exchange.

Emil and Arlene Janky owned the home from 1956 until 1972. They raised three children there. Emil was the grocery department manager at the Lewis and Smith store. The Christensens moved into the home in 1972 and stayed until 2017. Byron and Sharon Christensen raised children Holly, Morgan, Cindy and Andrew in the house.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

The current owner, Amber Mercado, bought the home just a year ago. She was living in west Omaha but did not feel a sense of community. Neighbors didn’t speak to each other and she really wanted something friendlier for herself and her two boys. She also wanted a porch swing, large closets, running space for her three dogs, and great neighbors. She found that and more. Here, people shovel each other’s driveways, check on each other’s kids, jump in and walk a dog or two when needed. She feels this was absolutely the best place for her family. Improvements were made to the home before she moved in, so Amber has been very fortunate. Enjoy the woodwork, big windows, spectacular staircase, and of course the front porch swing!
In 1923, this two-and-a-half story Craftsman home was built for John Lewis Corbaley and his family. Corbaley had the initial “C” cut and mounted to the south exterior side of the brick chimney.

The exterior house surface is a combination of brick, clapboard and stucco. A secondary Tudor influence is evident from the false half-timbering on the exterior. The front façade features a partial width porch with roof supported by tapered square brick columns. Note the decorative braces under the gables and the windows with three vertical panes over one large pane. A large picture window was added to the east side of the home for an elderly occupant to view the backyard.

John L. Corbaley started off as a dry goods merchant, then became a shoe salesman and repaired shoes. He owned his business and had a few locations, one located on Maple Street. Corbaley family members lived in the house until 1960. After the passing of John’s wife Ollie in 1954, his daughter Irene Corbaley Lindell, along with her husband and children, moved in with him until his passing in 1959.
Howard and Shirley Edwards were the next homeowners. Howard was a carpenter. During their first year in the property, he renovated the bathroom and extended the garage. Eventually, Howard started his own business, Hawkeye Homes, and built many Omaha houses. Later Howard concentrated on sales, and became a very successful Century 21 real estate broker. Howard and Shirley spent 20 years in this home.

John A. Toohey owned the house for a couple of years before Paul and Susie Toohey Sieczkowski bought the property in 1982. Paul was an outstanding athlete, and at 6’3”, was an especially gifted basketball player, first for Holy Name High School, and later for UNO where he became one of their all-time high scorers.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

The current owners, Tim and Jen Bowes, moved from the 194th and Q Street area and purchased the house in February 2009. The Bensonhurst neighborhood is a great fit for their large family. They love the abundance of neighbor kids, the tree-lined street and the big yards. The Bowes’ projects included removal of living room and stairway carpet to reveal beautiful hardwood floors in excellent condition. They also removed wallpaper and painted the interior. During the kitchen renovation five years ago, they discovered what had been a small sitting area that had a window, and now, it is covered by their microwave. They removed a wall, widened a doorway and updated all appliances to increase function. They recently removed two large closets to open up the basement into a family room.
HISTORY
Built in 1908, this house is a simplified Queen Anne style from the Victorian era. The style is loved for the asymmetrical assembly of gables, verandas, steep roofs and turrets. An assortment of rooflines can be seen: a closed gable dormer, two hip-roofed dormers, varied veranda roofline, and hipped roof with wide eaves. Note several window styles: triple double hung windows in the front gable, a traditional Queen Anne window centered on the second story in a bay window, cottage windows on the first-floor, front and side façade with simple lead glass patterns, and double-hung windows on secondary facades. The circular veranda with Tuscan columns is the most prominent home feature. Columns continue inside, separating the dining and living rooms.

The home, along with 3112 next door, was built by Harvey J. Grove. Harvey J. Grove and Amanda "Mandy" Bellis Grove purchased the lot in 1908, and the home was completed later that year. The couple had two children, June and Harold (aka Ted), who were 14 and 11 per the census of 1910.

Harvey excelled as a businessman, and held some of the most impressive titles: Vice President of Farmers & Mechanic Bank of Benson, founding member of State
Savings and Loan Association, owner of Omaha Lumber and Coal Company, and most notably, President of Grove Company. It is estimated that he, along with his son Harold J. (Ted) Grove, built over 2000 homes in Omaha.

Nelson (Nels) Colson, a self-employed carpenter and Grove’s brother-in-law, likely teamed up with him in 1908 to build their wives’ homes, 3108 and 3112. Nels was married to Anna Bellis, the younger sister of Mandy Bellis Grove. Both families are listed in the 1910 census living in their respective homes. In fact, Ruth Bellis, niece of Mandy and Anna, is living in the Colson home at 3112.

In 1913 both the Groves and the Colsons sold their homes. The homeowner for the next nine years were the Sanborns and their widowed son-in-law, Dr. Lewis Moon, and their grand-daughter, Margaret Moon. Wynn and Margaret Rainbolt owned the home from 1926 to 1947. Initially, the Rainbolt’s rented to John and Alta Nellen for $45 per month. Harold and Esther Kauffman moved into the grand home in 1949. Harold was a partner in the law firm Gross, Welch, Vinardi, Kauffman and Day. Esther was a homemaker taking care of their five children. Esther Kauffman was 103 when she died this past February. The Kauffmans are still part of the Benson and greater Omaha community.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

The current owners, Jonathan and Colleen Chiacchere, previously of Gifford Park, moved in to the home in 2014. They restored the original hardwood floors, and you will see oak woodwork is preserved throughout the home, with special features including the doric columns, dentilled banister, and the egg and dart molding. The Chiaccheres also refinished several original radiators, and added a new vintage radiator to the upstairs sunroom, along with the necessary plumbing lines, to convert the sunroom to a four season room. They repaired ceilings, removed layers of wallpaper in the bedrooms, repaired the plaster, and re-painted. Much of the original hardware is still intact, including skeleton key locks and handles. The owners painstakingly stripped paint from the original hardware. Outside, they introduced native plants in the front beds, created a large flat garden area along the west side, and added pavers for borders.
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HISTORY

As you visit this Queen Anne house, note the dormer and two hip-roofed dormers, varied veranda roofline, and hipped roof with wide eaves. Several window styles are featured including triple double hung windows in the front gable, a traditional Queen Anne window centered on the second story in a bay window, cottage windows on the first-floor front and side façade with simple lead glass patterns, and double-hung windows on secondary facades. The circular veranda with Tuscan columns is the most prominent feature. The columns are carried into the home, separating the dining and living rooms.

The first owners were Nels and Anna Colson who previously lived in Ashland. The Colson’s purchased their Bensonhurst lot in 1908. The Colson family is shown in the 1910 census living on Bensonhurst Street (a previous street name). They had three children, Lynn, Ray and Lorine. Anna’s niece, Ruth Bellis lived with them, as well.

Nels, a Swedish immigrant, was a self-employed carpenter. His brother-in-law, Harvey J. Grove, was a well-known builder and lumber merchant in 1910. Nels worked with Harvey to build what are now referred to as the “twin homes”. Nels’ wife, Anna Bellis Colson, was
the younger sister of Harvey’s wife, Aanda "Mandy" Bellis Grove. You’ll notice the two homes appear identical and sit next door to one another at 3108 and 3112 North 58th. Further evidence of a familiar relationship is the 1918 Sanborn Map which shows the two homes on one parcel, despite two separate lots. The Colson’s remained in the home until 1913.

In 1916, Syrian immigrants, William and Frieda Zaroor purchased the home. By 1920, their daughter Mary, son-in-law Gabriel Shaddy, and granddaughter Virginia, lived with them. All became naturalized citizens. Several newspaper articles of the late 1910s describe them as active in societal parties and events. Gabriel worked in the Financial Records department for Union Pacific. Later, in 1921, Gabriel’s mother emigrated from Syria to also live with them.

After the Zaroor’s, there were many families that lived in the home: Hermanns, Andersons, Websters and most notably, the Draneys. Ceba and Cecil Draney owned the home for over 50 years, and raised their large family in this beautiful house. Members of the family are still in Omaha today.

IMPROVEMENTS

Original oak woodwork is preserved throughout, complementing the original hardwood floors which were restored by current owners Jimmy and Jess Lee. They exposed the brick chimney in the guest bedroom, put in a new foyer floor with custom tile, and installed new wallpaper in the stairway with a vintage design. On the third floor they added a master closet. Other cosmetic repairs include adding new blinds, painting the main floor, and improving the back landscaping. Future plans include restoring the kitchen to a more period appropriate design for the home.
The house at 3111 North 58th Street was built in 1912 and features the center gable cottage style common between 1870 and 1940. This style is an adaptation of the Gothic revival house with a central dormer. True to the cottage style, the home is rectangular with the long end facing the street. The house sits atop a concrete block foundation. The hipped roof dormer features short double-hung windows.

The home is frame construction with narrow horizontal clapboard siding. The porches in older cottage models were usually shallow with square posts carrying the support, as seen in this home. Asymmetry was common among the later cottage styles. While this home has the traditional three bays, the windows and front door are placed off center to interrupt the orderly bays created by the dormer and porch roofline. The window on the right side of the front façade has double fixed lights, while the window on the left has only one fixed light.

Robert G. Crossley purchased Bensonhurst Lot 19 in February 1912. Mr. Crossley was the first owner, when the lot fronted on Imogen Avenue, prior to annexation of Benson into Omaha and the renaming of all the streets. Mr. Crossley did not remain in the home long and sold it to William W. Ward in September 1916.
Ward was a dentist working in Omaha at 501 Paxton in 1914, then at the First National Bank Building in 1917. According to the 1920 census Dr. Ward and his wife Edith had three sons and one daughter, William E. (age 11), Charles J. (age 8), John (age 6), and Elizabeth J. (age 4). The Ward family made 3111 their home until 1932 when it was sold to William Dole.

The house changed hands several times after the Ward family. Mr. Dole sold the home to Leslie Berry and his wife in 1944 who sold only six months later to Clarence E. and Vera K. McKinney. Vera passed away in 1974, but Mr. McKinney remained in the home until 1984. At that time, the home was purchased by Robert Leighton, owner until 1988 when the current homeowner, Christine Watson, purchased the home.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

Christine loved the home for the space it offered her two kids and her yoga practice. A major project was replacing all the floors with cherry wood back in 1998. Notice the striking grid pattern on the first floor. The intricate woodwork of the fireplace, with its unique hummingbird cover, is original to the home.

In 2000 Christine married Joe Watson and they continued renovating the home together. Christine designed the beautiful backyard which is certified a Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. The yard includes a stone patio, multi-level terracing, and a wealth of plants and flowers. Christine and Joe added a sunroom off the kitchen giving a great view to this lovely sanctuary.
The classic Craftsman style is highlighted at 3126 North 58th Street. This all-brick bungalow was built in 1923 and is dominated by a pitched gable roof and wide, bracketed eaves. An *Omaha World-Herald* announcement lists the building permit for an $8,000 “brick veneer dwelling,” for N.N. Galbreath. The property includes an all-brick, two-car garage that matches the house brick. Undoubtedly, such a large garage was a relatively rare feature for the time period. Adding an interesting design touch are the stone capitals on either side of the front porch. Other than the screened-in sun porch, all the windows are original.

N.N. Galbreath, the first owner, lived in the home until 1928 when he moved to 2519 North 55th St, in the Country Club neighborhood. Galbreath was a budding entrepreneur operating several car dealerships across Benson and Omaha. He was in the car business at a time when the automobile rapidly became the preferred mode of transportation. He owned Ford dealerships at 60th and Military, 56th and Military Street, and was later vice-president and general manager of Smith-Galbreath Pontiac.

Bessie Ellison owned the home for 22 years. Research showed that Bessie owned quite a few Omaha properties. She was the widow of one of Omaha’s “most successful
businessmen of his age, and that Omaha could call his own, Frank E. Ellison. At age 14 he was employed by J. P. Jerps, who, along with Carl A. Swanson, built up a business, one of the greatest of its kind west of New York City. Mr. Ellison became vice president of the company and two-thirds owner, until his untimely death in 1918 at the young age of 33 from influenza. Their firm later became known as C.A. Swanson and Sons, known for their TV dinners.

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Andresen moved into the home in 1952. The Andresen family, Danish immigrants, earned their living as farmers. Carl’s father purchased 80 acres, near 72nd & Redick, in the 1870s. The fruit farm began as a vineyard and later developed into an apple orchard. Many growing up in the neighborhood would visit the Andresen Hanson Fruit Farm for apple picking in the Fall.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

Lori and Jack Hubbell moved into the home in 2002, and lovingly restored and renovated it. Throughout their travels, the owners acquired an extensive collection of Asian and European art; many adorn the home. The interior features numerous original pieces including the fireplace mantle and tiles, door and window hardware, first-floor white oak floors and mahogany doors and trim. Notice the upstairs pine flooring and trim. The Hubbells salvaged many parts and furnishings from other buildings, including an ornate iron fireplace grate, floor lamps, wooden Oriental screens and an 18th Century French candelabra (which was electrified for contemporary use).

One of the first projects was stripping years of nicotine and smoke stains from the walls. The Hubbells also remodeled the kitchen and bathrooms; and were sensitive to the building’s history. The first-floor office features custom bookshelves that match the molding and woodwork in the rest of the home. Originally the master bedroom was upstairs but was moved downstairs. The Hubbells hired a contractor for kitchen and electrical work. They also contracted the custom enclosure of the front porch. They did most of the other renovation themselves.
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Rasmus Nielsen, Omaha contractor, submitted a permit to build a $3,500 frame dwelling at 3318 North 58th Street in March 1924. A Classic Craftsman bungalow, this home retains the original clapboard siding on both the house and garage, includes overhanging eaves, original windows and exterior light fixture. Other than the front porch enclosure which was done in 1952, the house is believed to look almost exactly as it did nearly 100 years ago. Thousands of bungalows, many in the Craftsman style, were built in Omaha after the turn of the 20th century. Many of these bungalows still stand today, and surround neighborhoods lined by Omaha’s historic commercial streetcar nodes.

The first owners were Howard and Eleanor Peck, who raised two daughters in this home. According to the 1930 and 1940 U.S. Census, Howard Peck was an accountant with the telephone company. Local records reveal the Pecks were very involved in volunteer service at Benson Presbyterian Church. Eleanor Peck was elected “chairman of the friendship circle” at Benson Presbyterian. She hosted the church’s missionary circle in 1933. She was also a cast member of “The Gauge of Youth”, a church production at Benson Community Hall.

The current homeowners, Mike and Sue Baden, purchased the property from Mr. Peck in 1977. They are only the second owners, and just like the Pecks, they
raised two daughters in this home. Everyone in the Baden family attended Benson High School, and all remember fondly the short jaunts to town and to Louis’ Market at the end of the street.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

Much of the original oak woodwork was unpainted when Mike and Susie Baden moved in. They have been careful to make necessary upgrades without compromising interior historic character. The house still features original door and window hardware. The Badens renovated the upstairs and main floor, rewired the home, and renovated the kitchen and bathroom to make them more functional. In the basement they added a family room, laundry room and bath.

They appreciate the classic front porch and the open interior layout. Adding character to an already character-rich home is the dining room table that was purchased by Mike’s grandparents in 1931, and recently refinished. Much of the home’s renovations were done by the Badens themselves, with help from their Dads and other family and friends. Mike tells us that while employed at Union Pacific, he utilized the railroad’s in-house repair resources for ideas and guidance. The Badens love their manicured park-like backyard and the family-friendly neighborhood feel.
HISTORY
Local architect Leo J. Dworak designed this home for William J. Miller. Dworak enjoyed a long, illustrious career designing dozens of homes and commercial buildings throughout Omaha. His work spanned from the 1930s to the 1980s. The 3328 house was completed in 1939 and cost $3,000. It was known in early Omaha World-Herald advertisements as a “snappy frame bungalow”, built on “one of the most beautiful streets in Benson.” The current owner hangs the original Dworak blueprints in the home.

The house was built in the Minimal Traditional style, which was popular in the United States from about 1935-1950. Identifying features of the style include a low or immediate pitched roof, often gabled, generally small, and one story. The roof eaves usually have little or no overhang, with a minimal amount of added architectural detail. These homes were known for their functionality and economical design.

The Federal Housing Administration stated “simplicity in exterior design gives the small house the appearance of maximum size” and recommends a concentration on simplicity, scale, a careful placement of windows and doors, and to make the house look larger by using only one or two cladding materials. Due to tight budgetary constraints during the Great Depression, architects often designed small houses with ultra-efficient floor plans.
Arguably the home’s most well-known resident was local politician Warren Swigart. Swigart was a lifelong Omaha public servant who served in multiple offices. He was elected to Omaha’s first City Council in 1957 after serving three years on the old City Charter as a city commissioner. He ran for Mayor in 1965, finishing third in the primary mayoral election. Swigart later worked for the A.V. Sorensen for four years.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

The current homeowner, Heather Davis, lives in the home with her partner, Sean Bradley. Originally painted pink, her side-gabled home with its prominent front-gable entry has maintained its original cedar clap siding, decorative trim, and eight-over-eight sash windows. Both the sun porch and the garage, with their distinctive cat slide roofs, are also original. The exterior wood siding was recently restored, along with many of the original windows. Older windows keep original charm and historic character in a house. She recommends restoration, not replacement, of original wood siding as vinyl lacks the depth and texture found in original cladding.

Heather quips that historic preservation is not just for big, grand houses. “You can do a lot for the environment on a budget.” The interior features a great deal of original character including restored/preserved oak and pine flooring, crown molding in the living room, doors with crystal doorknobs, and brass Art Deco-inspired backplates. Heather repaired and polished the door hardware, painted the main living spaces, and most recently, installed a new roof.

Her next big project is the restoration of the sun porch interior, including reglazing and refinishing the original window, refinishing and staining the wood flooring, and refinishing the bead board ceiling. In addition to Heather’s restoration projects, she also retiled the kitchen floor, and whimsically decorated the kitchen with “Swigart for Mayor” signs found by an electrician in the second floor eaves.
HISTORY

This home was constructed in 1908 by Erastus Benson. In 1959, a 58th Street News reporter interviewed John Lewis Corbaley, and he confirmed that he was a carpenter in Benson’s employ, and worked on the home. It is a textbook example of the Craftsman style as it features original shake siding, a side-gabled roof, and a prominent front porch with wide, unenclosed eaves. The most character-defining façade feature is the large central bracketed dormer. The Craftsman style was a favorite choice during the first three decades of the 20th century. Typically, these houses with side-gabled roofs are usually found in the Northeastern and Midwestern United States. A standard Craftsman is usually one and one-half stories, though two-story iterations are common.

The original owner was Minnie Burgess Wilson, sister of Ward Burgess, co-owner of the Burgess Nash Department store in the Old Market. Minnie purchased the property for $4,500 in 1908 from Erastus Benson’s firm, Elsinore Place Company. Unfortunately, in 1912, Minnie filed for divorce from her husband Charles Wilson, and lost the property to Conservative Savings and Loan. The bank then sold the property for $2,800 to Vincent Kenny.
Vincent Kenny, an inventor of the water tube boiler, was a successful businessman who ran his firm out of the Omaha Savings and Loan Building downtown. He and his family lived in the home for a few years before selling it to Joseph Lean for $5,000 in 1918.

Mr. Lean was born in Cornwall, England, and came to America in the late 1880s. He was a successful traveling lumber salesman. The home would stay in the extended family for the next 65 years. Joseph Lean’s brother John, and his sister Annie Lean Husby, lived in the home along with Annie’s daughter Marie, son-in-law, Ira Chappell, and Marie and Ira’s children. Ruth Chappell, daughter of Ira and Marie, would later marry Don McGonigal, and they stayed in the home until 1983.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

Current owner Jenny Wulff purchased 3332 in 1995. She grew up in the Omaha area, and when she wanted a new home, she looked for an older home with character and a big yard. Her realtor suggested Benson; and the rest is history. The interior is full of original detailing, including rich, unpainted woodwork throughout, plaster walls, original doors and hardware, and leaded glass windows. The entry wall covering in the art nouveau anaglypta style, is believed to be original to the home.

Jenny has made sensitive and minimal changes to her property, including upgrading the bathroom and kitchen in the past few years, replacing some windows, and completing the exterior paint just this summer. Though some modernization was necessary, the owner feels it is important to preserve original features and to maintain period appropriateness. Jenny appreciates the diversity of the area; and being able to walk to Benson’s Maple Street business district while living tucked away in the neighborhood full of single-family homes.
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A special thanks to the Bensonhurst Neighborhood and our home owners for sharing their properties with us! The "58th Street Newsgirls", whose reporting back in the summers of '58 to '61, were an invaluable tool that helped piece together the histories of the homes and their families. To Yvonne Carlson Wagner and Elizabeth Otte, your time and assistance is truly appreciated. To all the former residents and families REO interviewed, thank you for your time, photos, insights, and histories. And to the Meadowlark Model A Club for bringing out their vintage Ford cars on Sunday.

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